

LATINO LEADERS NETWORK™

MICKEY IBARRA, FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN

**Remarks by:
The Honorable Carlos Gutierrez
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This is a tremendous honor. And to be introduced by Mario Diaz-Balart and Joe Garcia, it just makes it even more compelling to me and more special. I thought this was going to be an easy lunch, by the way. I realize that it's a little bit more emotional for me than I was expecting. So, thank you. It's just a wonderful honor, and I can't tell you how much it seems to me to have been chosen by you. A Hispanic chosen by fellow Hispanics is probably the biggest compliment I can have.

I was thinking as I was sitting down here, have you ever met anyone who doesn't like Mickey Ibarra? Thank you, Mickey. And I'll tell you, it's the first time I've ever seen -- and this should happen all the time, but he recognized the folks who are waiting on our tables. I've been to a lot of dinners and lunches and breakfasts in D.C., I've never seen anyone do that, and I think it's just one more trait of Mickey Ibarra. So, thank you for being Mickey Ibarra.

You may know, I was born in Cuba, and because of matters of family and work, my father got a job in Mexico after we became U.S. citizens, so we moved to Mexico, and I essentially grew up in Mexico -- junior high school, high school -- and I left and I came back and I started my career there. So, with this idea of driving a truck, selling cornflakes, it's incredible but it's a true story. I stayed in the company for a couple of years. I was given an opportunity to, after five years, given an opportunity to work in the U.S. for a couple of years. I went back, and then I had the chance to run what was called and what is still called Kellogg de México S.A.S.V.so, Kellogg Mexico.

After I had been there for five years, I'll never forget a conversation I had with my then-boss who was the president of Kellogg International. And I was saying, "You know, I'd been here for five years, I think we've done a pretty good job, and I would like to be transferred to another country." He said, "Oh, of course. We can think about a new transfer for you." I said, "I'd like to go to one of the big Anglo markets." Because, you know, with cereal, the per capita consumption is the Anglo markets, so, it's the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, and Australia.

The question he asked me -- I didn't understand the question. What he said, "Are you sure you want to do that? You want to go to Canada instead of, say, being the president of Latin America? You know, you can lead Latins." And he kept insisting on that, "Do you want to go and be a leader in Canada or do you want to stay and lead Latins?" What he was telling me -- this was 1988, so I guess, it's a long time ago and we've come a long way -- but I think what he was asking is, or he was doubting in his mind, is, can a Latin lead non-Latins? I didn't realize that that was the question. And I thought about it and thought about it, and as I moved on in my career, I thought about it some more. I thought about it every day, why is it that he had this perception that a Latin can be a good leader as long as he's leading Latins. A very difficult thing to combat and a very difficult obstacle, and probably, unfortunately, still in some people's minds because again, we've come a long way. I'm sure that that question was once asked about African Americans. Can an African American lead non-African Americans? Well, we've got an African American president, so we've answered that question. And society continues to answer those questions that tend to be somewhat -- I would call them somewhat primitive now. I started observing leadership at that time.

And by the way, I did get the transfer to Canada, so I was -- and as I look back now, I've had the opportunity to observe some great leaders and I'll tell you something, I've met leaders who are tall and who are short; some who are thin, some are heavy-set; some are extroverts, some are painfully shy. Okay? There is no such thing as a profile for a leader. In the business world 10 years ago, people thought it was Jack Welch. So, I guess, that means if you want to be a great leader, you had to be this little Irish guy who screamed at everybody and ran around and -- no, that was his style. Every leader that I've observed who has been a great leader has had his or her own style, so there is no such thing as the profile that people are born with. Everyone, everyone has a shot. And I'll tell you what I've observed about great leaders. Just four simple traits.

One is they have the will to lead. They want to lead. Leadership is risky business, because you tell people, "Follow me,

and I'm going to take you to a good place." If it doesn't work out, you're responsible. Some people love that. Some people love the idea of getting up in the morning and solving an insurmountable problem. Some people love the idea of having a terrible problem in their company because they can get in there and exert leadership and just do what they have to do to make it right. Not everybody does. I know a lot of people who like to be the boss, that doesn't mean that they are people who have the will to lead. So, the will, you want to lead. Every leader I've observed tends to have that.

They also have this idea that they believe in something that's bigger than themselves. And I'll tell you, if your people observe that you believe only in yourself, they're going to follow you because they have to. Because they're probably working for you and they're getting paid. But they're not going to follow you to the end. They're going to tolerate you. Great leaders that I've worked with, that I've observed, either it's the team that is bigger than they are, it's the institution, it's the organization, it's the project, it's whatever it is, but every day they display that they are smaller than that, that the objective is the biggest thing in their life. And once people see that, they'll follow them wherever. The flipside is, once people see, boy, this guy is just -- he's always looking up or she's always looking up, and they're looking to see how they can get promoted and looking to see how they can get recognition and looking to see how they can become the guy who gets all the credit, that is a real trap.

The third thing that I wish I knew this 25 years ago. Leaders, great leaders are self-aware. So, they know what they're good at and what they're not good at. I thought, you know, 20 years ago, a 30-year-old leader, I thought the job of the leader was to know everything. I had to have every answer, I had to ask every good question, I had to do all the talking. That's why I was leader. And it was -- I mean, for my people, it was miserable. And we've all probably worked for someone like that, where they have to be right because they're the leader. And as I observed more mature leaders and leaders growing, I found that they had the self-confidence to say, "Hey, this is who I am. I'm good at this stuff, but I'm not very good at this. So, I'm going to surround myself with people who are good at what I'm not good at."

It takes a lot of self-confidence, but the sooner you get there, the sooner you are self-aware and very comfortable with who you are, the quicker you will get to leadership. People love that. They love vulnerability. They love a leader who isn't afraid to be vulnerable. They love someone who understands that you cannot be good at everything. And that's where the diversity comes in, as you surround

yourself with people who are different. And that takes you to diversity.

We've all seen companies where the senior management were the same. They play golf on weekends together, they take breaks together, and they finish their own sentences. That's not a team where new ideas are going to come from. It just isn't, and it's been proven. So, when people ask about, is diversity just a program? What is it for? Diversity is about everything. If you have a leader leading the team who's an introvert, he probably wants to surround himself with some extroverts. Imagine a team of introverts. Or a team of extroverts. Or people who've had different cultural backgrounds, people who are born in different countries, people who have a different gender, people who have different sexual orientation. People who are different. And that makes a tremendous difference.

And then, the last thing about leadership that I've noticed is you can understand leaders when they talk. I had the opportunity to spend time in Baghdad with General Petraeus, and the first thing he said to me, he says, "Mr. Secretary, you work in business so you probably know that all great strategies start with a simple idea." He said, "Our simple idea was that we'd go into a town and we'd clear it out of the bad guys, and then, we'd go back to camp, and the bad guys would come back in. So, the insight, the simple insight that led to what we call the surge was we have to sleep where we fight. That's it. That led to the strategy. But it was a simple idea."

So, too often, people confuse complexity with sophistication. And we've all been -- watch out for the leader who walks into a room with one hour PowerPoints and there are charts in there that nobody understands, and people don't ask the question because they say, "Oh, I probably don't understand it because it's me. But no wonder he's a senior VP. I mean, he understands these things. The circles and arrows and thousands of numbers on one page, it's just an amazing thing."

Leaders understand that their job is to communicate, not to impress. So, if you walk out of a room with a leader and you're not really sure what it is he or she wants, it's not your fault. It's the idea that they mistook complexity for sophistication.

I had a secret weapon when I was coming up in the ladder, in the corporate ladder, and that was a role model, who I never met by the way, and I still regret to this day that I never met him. And I do want to just say that I may have been the second Hispanic CEO, but the person who I admired and followed was, I think, the first Hispanic CEO. And Rudy Besera is he here? Okay. The man's name was Roberto Goizueta. He was a Cuban American. I was sitting in my

office in Mexico and I get the *Fortune* magazine and I start reading it and I said, "My God, it's a Cuban-American CEO of the Coca-Cola Company." This was 1984.

As of that day, I became a fanatic about Coca-Cola. I read their annual reports. I read any article that had his name. I read anything about what he was like. And I'll tell you it helped me. It helped me. There is nothing wrong. In fact, it's a great thing to have someone you admire. It's a great thing to have role models. And there are role models in this room for all of you to focus on. For all you know, Joe Garcia, Mario Diaz-Balart, Congressman Bonilla, we have futures of mayor -- just people who you can say, "That is what I would like to be." It is so helpful. And it requires a little bit of humility, because some people think, "Hey, I'm not going to admire anybody." I'm just going to admire my father and my mother and my brother, and that's all there is. But it's actually very, very healthy.

And I'll tell you a little bit about this man who I came to know through reading. By the way, he had the reputation of answering every single letter that was written to him, so I wrote him a letter saying, "Hey, I'm a general manager of Kellogg Mexico. I'm also Cuban American. It's amazing that you've gone to the top, and I admire you." He never answered. So, he answered almost every letter.

But, he was -- and you would know better than I, but what I understood -- and everybody from Coke who I've talked to, I always asked, "Talk about Roberto. Talk about Roberto." He was very shy, some would say painfully shy which is rare for Cuban American. And he had a very strong Cuban accent, very strong. So, he didn't like to do a lot of public speaking. It didn't suit him. It just wasn't what he loved. His passion was financial strategy. He was a genius. He knew how to make money. So, he would stay in Atlanta and surround himself with his finance folks and think through how to move the company forward strategically.

And speaking about self-awareness and believing in something bigger than yourself, what he did -- that is one of the gutsiest things I've ever seen happen in the world of business -- he named as his president his number two, a man by the name of Don Keough. Don Keough was a back-slapping Irish man who just loved people. He loved -- he was the Irish Mickey Ibarra. He loved people. He loved the sales force. He loved customers. He loved the employees. And Roberto said, "You go out and you run this company. I'm going to give you the strategy, but you go out and do whatever you need to do. Because the kind of stuff that you're good at, is not the stuff that I'm good at."

The amazing thing is that Don Keough was Roberto's competition for the top job, but he had the foresight, the self-awareness, the sense that, "this isn't about me, this is about the Coca-Cola Company," and he had the guts to appoint him. They were together for about, I don't know, 15 years? And you go back and look at that performance of that company; it's one of the most amazing things I've seen in my life.

So, I was lucky to have someone like that. Someone that paved the way. Someone who made it easier for me, because I could basically follow him and see how he was doing it and see how he was leading other people. So, don't ever think that it's wrong or bad or it says the wrong thing about you if you admire someone. I think it's actually a very, very noble thing and a very courageous thing to do.

I was at an offsite one time at my old company, and we were talking about diversity -- and a pretty big group, about 50 people, senior people in the company, it was in the '90s -- and the president of the North American Business, which was the biggest business in the company, and he was kind of like my competitor for the top job, he was saying, "You know, on work-life balance, it's not just the company's responsibility. It's also the employee's responsibility." The employee has to take charge and has to also tell us that he or she needs some work-life balance. For example, if you have a little league game and you want to go see your son play little league at two o'clock in the afternoon, you should be able to tell your boss, "Hey, my son's playing little league this afternoon. I won't be here."

Now, by that time, I had been in the company for over 20 years, almost 25, and it occurred to me that I had missed a lot of my son's little league games. I used to go to the ones that were seven o'clock at night, but I don't ever remember in my whole career leaving at two o'clock in the afternoon to go to a little league game. And maybe it was a little bit of an immigrant's insecurity. Maybe I was just a little bit too concerned about stereotypes. So, if I asked my boss, say it's two o'clock in the afternoon, I want to go to a little league game, I thought what they would think is, "Of course, these Cubans, that's all they think about, is baseball."

So, I didn't push it. And if somebody worked 10 hours a day, I'd work 14. And if others went to the little league game, I would stay and work. And I don't regret it because I think it is the burden that every generation of immigrants has and it's the burden that all previous generations of immigrants have had, is the idea that we've got to prove ourselves. You can say, "Heck, no. I don't have to prove myself to anyone." But we're doing this because we believe in something bigger than ourselves. We believe in our community. And if we have to do that because there are people who

are suspicious, because there are people who don't understand, do it. Do it. It'll help you and it'll work.

I believe that this generation of immigrants -- because the interesting thing is that now it's the turn of Hispanics. It's not like we've had Hispanic immigration for 200 years. Hispanic immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon. Our job is to prove that because of the Hispanic immigration that this country has had, whether they came in undocumented or whether they came in through the front door with a passport and a visa, this country will be better because we are all here. This country will be a better country because of our community.

And I'll tell you something, I would not have gotten to the CEO job if it weren't for the workers who worked on the shop floor in that factory in Mexico. Many of them didn't have first or second grade education, but the way they've worked when we, as a leadership team, finally got their confidence, they made us look so good, and I'll never forget those folks. And I see them, I still see their faces, and I see them all over the places in D.C., I still see them around the country, I still see them in New York, and I know what our people can do and I know what they can do for this country. And we've got this incredible opportunity in our hands to improve their life and to improve the prosperity of this country by finally, finally having the foresight, the courage to pass Immigration Reform, and I thank all of you because I know you're involved. I know in your way, you're involved and I thank you for your leadership.

So, it's great when we hear, "Hey, 14 percent of our company is Hispanic," or "we're shooting for 13," or "we've got eight percent of our directors on the board are Hispanic," we've been through that, that's the past. We want leadership. Shoot for the top. Yes, shoot to lead Anglo-Americans. Shoot to step out of the community. Shoot for the mainstream. You've got it, you deserve it, and you've got it in your blood. Don't let anyone try to box you in a corner that says you can manage Latin people, you're going to be the Latin American guy, and you're okay but stay in your community. No way. Get into the mainstream. Get into the middle of things. Lead and shoot for the top, and you'll be surprised. You'll be surprised how dreams come true and magic does happen in this incredible country.

Thank you for listening and thank you for this award. Thank you.

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